2001

Images and Stereotypes of Women in Advertising

Lindsay Nicole Anderson

IMAGES AND STEREOTYPES OF
WOMEN IN ADVERTISING

LINDSAY NICOLE ANDERSON

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Barry University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the completion of the Honors Program

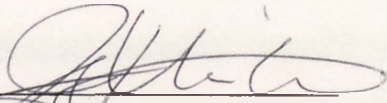Barry University
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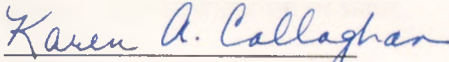

April 2001

Barry University
Honors Program

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the completion
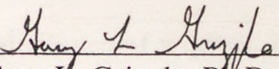of the Honors Program

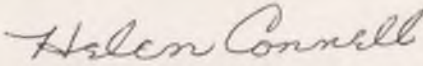Images and Stereotypes of Women in Advertising

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April 2001

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<u>Images and Stereotypes of Women in Advertising</u>   April/2001

Abstract of a senior honors thesis at Barry University.
Thesis supervised by Professor Jung M. Choi

Number of pages in text <u>37</u>

Advertising as a form of mass media functions as a primary socialization agent in the United States. Professionals in the industry rely on the use of images and stereotypes to convey their intended messages succinctly and accurately to millions of consumers. Because of our current patriarchal social system, women fall victim to gender stereotypes that are highly invasive and seemingly impossible to overcome. The images and stereotypes used in advertising that women must face or live up to include images and standards of beauty, focus on and objectification of the female body, sexual stereotypes, violence against women, trivialization and limitation of female roles, and the use of child pornography. Further, women of color must face additional stereotypes and limitations that are imposed upon them as a result of the combination of their gender and race. This project will uncover and critically evaluate some of the many stereotypes of women used in advertising. Because of the power of advertising and how it serves to define and exemplify normal and desirable attributes of women, it is important that these images be uncovered and alternatively viewed. In order to successfully undermine these exploitive and profit-driven tactics, all consumers must become aware of these stereotypes, which are constructed and heavily saturated with assumptions. In doing this,

consumers will be provided with an alternative outlook of women as portrayed in

advertising, as will women be provided with a critical way to examine

themselves.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Dr. Jung Choi for his extensive assistance in the completion of this project. In class and under his supervision, I have learned to question traditional views of society and to seek social justice. In addition, I would like to thank Dr. Callaghan, Dr. Connell, and Dr. Grizzle for their assistace.

I would also like to thank Lisa Navas, who was instrumental in bringing me to Barry University and has consequently made my graduation possible.

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Introduction

Mass media seems to be a necessity in contemporary American society. People rely on the agents of mass media for all types of information. It has become so prevalent that a day without the use of our TVs, radios, or newspapers is hardly imaginable. Advertising is an especially lucrative agent within the industry, raking in over $100 billion a year (Still Killing Us Softly, 1987). Residents are exposed to advertisements while reading the morning paper, bringing in the mail, driving to work, listening to the radio, watching TV, grocery shopping; and this all in one day. When it is all said and done, a person is bombarded with upwards of 1500 ads in an average day (Still Killing Us Softly, 1987).

The underlying factor in advertising as a form of mass media is money. As Americans in a capitalist society, money is the universal language. The ultimate purpose behind the existence of mass media has changed greatly from a source of information and entertainment to a multi-billion dollar-a-year industry that touches the lives of every American, every day.

Advertising as a form of mass media has become so wide spread that it can be considered as one of the major socialization agents for our children, along with others such as the family, education, and religion (hooks, 1992). It shapes our thoughts and defines normative and acceptable behavior to new generations. And as such, it does not come value-free, as the media tycoons would like us to believe. Within the images portrayed in advertising are embedded the ideals of those who create the images. The producers of these images are very powerful

people, not only in the aspect that they control what the rest of the country sees, but also because they have the means to stay powerful, to keep feeding us these images. And how do they obtain these means to stay in power? Through the money they make from the consumers. We rarely ever question their motives, but rather keep the system alive by feeding the industry with our hard-earned money in the ultimate desire to obtain more products and material goods. It is a vicious, self-fulfilling prophecy.

Advertising as a system of socialization teaches us to accept the status quo, to desire the norm rather than go against the grain. According to the Structural Functional theory, which will be discussed at greater length to come, the importance of the social system precedes any need of the individual. The agents of socialization, which include advertising and mass media, serve to define normativity and distribute the images of normalcy to all members of society. Citizens must accept these norms and adapt their individual wants and beliefs to the greater authority of the system or risk being seen as deviant and outside of the norm, hence a threat to the smooth-running social system. Consistent with Descartes' theory of dualism, the norm becomes the centered, desirable quality that the ideals of those in charge inflict on the images of advertising and mass media. Anything beyond this norm is seen as marginal and therefore undesirable and outside the center, on the periphery. This type of dualistic society produces "passive consumerism" in which people consume products uncritically (Fromm, 1994). The problem is that when these products are consumed uncritically, the public also buys into the value system attached with the products and their

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creators. We compromise our identity, our morality, and our sensuality and sacrifice them to the control of the producers. This passive consumption allows the producers to create the images that we deem as normal, as acceptable, as desirable.

When we look at the aspects of normalcy encompassed within these images, we must realize that most advertising executives are white males. Therefore, it is beneficial to always portray the white male in a position of power over women and other races. But the power of the white male is not limited to the advertising industry. White males are the disproportionate majority in all aspects of the corporate world. They hold the positions with the most power that make the most money. Therefore, they have the resources to stay in power and enforce their ideals. For this reason, our society is run on the premise of white supremacy and patriarchy. Patriarchy, as defined by Allan Johnson (2001), is the extent to which a society is "male-dominated, male-identified, and male-centered" and also "involves a key aspect of the oppression of women." Most of the men working within this system are not even consciously aware that they are reiterating these ideals of dominance, but rather are just doing what has been done in the past, what they have been taught, and what seems to work. They have no awareness of the system they are abiding by because it has been so ingrained into all of us as "just the way the world works." They have bought into the "male gaze", which is defined through patriarchy as domination and repression of women through control over their thoughts and actions (Kaplan, 1983). The advertising industry

not only consists largely of these men, but also serves to reinforce their values throughout the rest of society by defining normal and desirable as white and male.

What are some of the images that the producers portray to us as the norm? They create a world in which almost every one is white or strives to possess as much "whiteness" as possible. In addition, men outnumber women 2 to 1 (Still Killing Us Softly, 1987) and have much more important roles and responsibilities than women. The role of the woman is usually supplementary to the man, or serves to satisfy the man's needs. The women in these images are young and beautiful, with a standard of beauty that embodies perfection. This image of perfection is highly unattainable to most of the women in the world. These images of how a woman should act, feel, look, and be are internalized by the women who consume them. Women constantly compare themselves and attempt to identify with the women presented in the images of advertising because of the fact that these images are presented as normal and desirable.

Throughout this project, the images of women that are presented in advertising will be examined. Part II of this project lays out the philosophical underpinnings of our society, namely functionalism. In part III, the constructed nature of the images used in advertising will be emphasized. Part IV will uncover and evaluate critically the images and stereotypes of women used by the creators of advertisements. These images and stereotypes are used to construct the world from which we are encouraged and blindly led to draw our definitions of what is normal, desirable, and acceptable. If we continue to consume these images without critical evaluation of their origin, meaning, and/or credence, we will

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continue to support the assault on the female body and mind. Therefore, part V

will offer alternative views of women as they are seen in advertising, as well as

open the constructed nature of these images up for discussion in an ultimate

attempt to undermine their credibility and assist in combating the pervasive

influence of the patriarchy.

Functionalist View of Society

In order to understand the extent of power of the images, the function that

mass media and advertising serves in our society must be understood clearly.

According to the functionalist paradigm presented by Talcott Parsons (1951), the

social system is seen as analogous to a living organism. Each system within a

society must perform its function to maintain a healthy and stable social system.

Each system must work together in order for society to survive. Therefore, what

is good for society reigns supreme over the needs of the individual. In this light,

advertising serves as a necessary component of our social system that assists in

socialization and normative definition. Within this schema, without mass media

functioning as such, our society runs the risk of becoming unhealthy and unstable,

which would hinder its chances for survival.

Because survival of the social system is so important, equilibrium and

stability must be maintained at all costs. Parsons proposes four functional

prerequisites for the survival of any social system that serve to assure this

equilibrium. First, every system needs to be able to adapt to changes in society

(Ritzer, 1992). This means that the branches of our social system, such as the

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economy, educational system, and mass media, have to be able to integrate changing views into their framework. Therefore, advertising must change the images it produces when different ideas become normative. Although the system must be able to adapt, the changes that come about should come slowly, through evolution. Sudden changes are seen as disruptive to the system. Second, a society must be able to integrate its members into the larger group, to maintain group solidarity and cohesion (Ritzer, 1992). Advertising produces images of what is normal so that people can identify with those images and with each other. The integration function assures that any changes will come about naturally, through evolution and disrupt society as little as possible. This aspect of cohesion allows for the third functional prerequisite of goal attainment (Ritzer, 1992). With the cohesiveness of the group intact, persons can all work toward a common, normative goal. Since changes in ideals occur slowly through natural evolution, it can be assured that the goals we strive for are the same. The final aspect is pattern maintenance, which serves to keep social order in tact (Ritzer, 1992). The major aspect of pattern maintenance is socialization, which occurs in large part from mass media and advertising. Through socialization, we are taught our proper social roles and functions, as well as the ideals we should abide by, which aid in the stability and survival of the whole system. We are rewarded for abiding by these roles and carrying out the functions ascribed to us. If we step out of line, we are punished through marginalization and shoved to the periphery.

Functionalism also contains inherent assumptions regarding society and the individual. Society is seen as existing *sui generis*, in and of itself. The norms

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of society are viewed as apolitical and neutral in origin, reflecting the assumed legitimacy of the social system. The system is seen as a source of reason, and therefore any challenges to the system are thought to be irrational and illogical. The system gains its legitimacy through the aforementioned functional prerequisites that work to conserve Parson's cybernetic hierarchy. This hierarchy entails the ideal of an ultimate reality, which exists outside of the individual. This ultimate reality is viewed as the driving force in society, a sort of blueprint of how the world works. It, in turn, influences the social system, which influences the cultural system. These three systems are seen as being high in information, but low in energy.

Rounding out the bottom of the hierarchy are what Parson's refers to as psychology and biology, which comprise the mind and body of individual human beings. These systems are seen to be low in information, but high in energy. The superior systems in this hierarchy are dependent on this high energy of the individuals to run, but the individuals are actually seen as outside of the system, not really a part of it. This idea can be compared to the fuel that runs a car. The car is dependent on the fuel to run properly, however the fuel is seen as outside of the system and not really a part of the car. According to Parsons, because humans are low in information, they should be faithful and rely on the systems that are high in information. Therefore, functionalism assumes that the individual's source of self is externalized and sacrificed for the greater good of the system. The self is passive and adapts to the system, rather than actively shaping it. The self is seen as dependent upon the system. Therefore, emphasis of change falls on

to the individual rather than the system, mainly because the system is seen as the ultimate source of reason, the ultimate reality. Rather than the system changing to meet the needs of an individual or group of individuals, these people must attempt to adapt their beliefs and actions to fit into those that society deems normal and acceptable. After all, if their beliefs run contrary to those of the system, they must be irrational and illogical.

To sum up Parson's view of a functionalist society, individuals are dependent on the system for reason and logic. The system will always reign superior over any person or group of persons, and change is brought about through evolution. Abrupt change will disrupt the smooth-running system and runs the risk of throwing the whole system out of balance, making it unstable. Each aspect of society serves a function within the greater picture of ultimate reality. Through each individual performing his or her assigned role, the norms of society that support this view of ultimate reality are achieved. And because the system is always more important, more logical, and more rational than the individual, we are taught not to question or change how the ultimate reality is shaped, lest we run the risk of causing an imbalance. Those few that do question the system are marginalized and written off as illogical and irrational, outside of the normative values of our ultimate reality.

This idea of functionalism can highlight the importance of the patriarchy that exists in American society. Patriarchy is interwoven into our ultimate reality, which influences the social and cultural systems. It is seen as pre-existent of any individual, and therefore legitimate and apolitical in nature. Patriarchal views of

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women are not questioned as to their legitimacy, but rather consumed by the individuals who look to the higher systems for information. This causes the internalization of patriarchal values to both men and women alike. Because these values are interwoven into the tapestry of our ultimate reality, they are seen as part of the blueprint of the way the world works. To question or to try and change these values would be to risk destroying our social system. Those who do question the assumptions of patriarchy are marginalized as radicals who are trying to disrupt our smooth-running system, and their ideals are deemed irrational and illogical.

These tenants of functionalism explain the persistence of patriarchy in America, despite any recent progress that women have made in the social world. Women today are seen more in all realms of society than they have been in the past, when most women were strictly assigned to the private sphere of society. However, the patriarchal ideals persist because change in a functionalist system must come slow, through evolution. And because it is the men who are in power to define our ultimate reality, women will remain victims to patriarchal ideals for a long time to come. In order to change how women are viewed in society, radical changes in our belief system must be made. If we wait for these ideals to naturally evolve toward gender equality, chances are that we will be waiting for many centuries to come.

The Construction of Images

Advertising products is a two-sided affair. On the one side, a product is presented and described for the usefulness to be evaluated by potential consumers. On the other less-obvious side, an image is being sold. The message of the advertisement contends that the accompanying image is possible if, and only if, the product is consumed (Hoffman-Jeep, 1996).

Advertising depends on images to get its messages across to the American public. These images are not pre-existent and must be constructed. The fact that images are constructed should tell us that they are not necessarily omnipotent and indisputable, but rather socially constructed by humans, and therefore laden with assumptions. For instance, the concept of "gender" is invisible when referring to men, yet becomes the main focus when referring to women (Mann & Zatz, 1998). This should show that gender is a social construction and therefore gender roles and images are subject to the political views of the advertising industry. However, one of the duties of advertising in a functionalist society includes that these socially constructed images are to be seen as apolitical and neutral in origin, giving them a façade of being natural. One way advertisers achieve this is to mask the images in a realistic representation, which is an imitation of our own world that hides the constructed nature of the images (Kaplan, 1983). Instead of being seen as a social construction of gender and gender hierarchy, men and male characteristics are centered, and any image of women is seen as the outside, the periphery. This representation of men as superior over women is used widely in advertising and consequently carried over into our reality. The superiority of men

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resulting from the construction of images is seen as being rational and logical according to the functional perspective. The struggle of women against the patriarchy that binds them is more than just political, but also encompasses other arenas such as philosophy, religion, and economics. With all these branches feeding into the same system of patriarchy, it is easier to view the gender hierarchy as natural and rational, rather than constructed (Callaghan, 1994).

Because these socially constructed images are seen as rational, a system of oppression resulting from the images becomes rationalized and written off as compliance with reason and truth. The oppressors in this system are seen as exerting power and privilege not for personal gain, but for maintaining social order (Callaghan, 1994), which is of the utmost importance in functionalism. Within the functional society, the people who create these images are those with the power and resources to communicate their ideals to millions of people, namely the white men who have inherited their power and pull from our system of patriarchy. Therefore, patriarchy becomes a bureaucratized form of oppression that benefits from the manner in which women are portrayed in the images of advertising.

Images are especially important in advertising because they are thought to portray the normative ideals, the standards by which all consumers must attempt to identify. Not only do images sell products, but they also sell a way of understanding the world (Ewen & Ewen, 1982). Images define both how we see others and how we view ourselves. We constantly compare ourselves to the images portrayed by advertisements in an attempt to conform as closely as

possible, rather than risk being shoved to the periphery and seen as undesirable by others within society.

Another construct used widely in advertising is stereotyping. Stereotypes allow the advertising industry to create an image that is easily identifiable by many people. The use of stereotypes is necessary because advertisements must portray many things in a very limited period of time. Stereotypes allow for a quick-reference tool to more easily get the intended point across. In addition, they make it possible for advertisers to portray the changing, moving world in a single, stationary picture (Goffman, 1976). Stereotypes are saturated into our social fabric to the extent that they are viewed as incontestable. The images of stereotypes are deeply rooted and serve as a determinant of how groups see each other and themselves (hooks, 1992). Although these stereotypes can be useful in getting a point across, they also play an important role in the development and maintenance of prejudice and oppression, especially of marginalized groups. Once these stereotypes are formed, they are highly resistant to change.

In our patriarchal society, the men in charge of creating the images that underlie stereotypes invent them to maintain political and economic dominance over women. The stereotypes created by men diminish the importance and intelligence of women, create physical images of perfection for women to conform to at all costs, and teach young girls how and what they should become – passive, dependent, and inferior. The stereotypes eventually become institutionalized and used as part of the socialization process for the next generation (Mann & Zatz, 1998).

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Women in Advertising

An Overview

Advertising in America serves many functions. The most obvious priority of advertising is to present products and services to the public for consumption. It is the best and most effective way for manufacturers and service providers to gain acknowledgement and presentation of their wares to as many potential consumers as possible, and therefore one of the most effective ways to increase profit margin. For this reason, advertising has become an extremely lucrative and pervasive industry, bringing in over $100 billion per year (Still Killing Us Softly, 1987). Because the industry is so pervasive, people absorb the messages brought to them through advertising uncritically, without analyzing their meanings or consequences to their thoughts and actions (Stephenson, Stover, & Villamor, 1997). The uncritical, passive consumption (Fromm, 1994) of the images of advertising allows the industry to serve additional functions that also escape the critical eye and become incorporated into our definition of the world.

Other functions that consequently result in the widespread use of advertising include socialization, norm-definition, and ideal image representation. Because our social system exists under patriarchal terms, both the extrinsic and intrinsic functions of advertising are colored by patriarchal values. These values serve to define the ideal female image of beauty, which is internalized and longed after by most American women (and men) whether they are aware of it or not. This image of beauty gives way to the objectification of women and their bodies, which can dehumanize and legitimize violence against women. These images

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also attempt to define and stereotype women and their sexuality, sending often-contradictory messages to women and young girls attempting to acquire and identify with their corresponding gender roles. Additionally, patriarchal values in advertising serve to define and limit the role of women, making them lesser beings when compared to men. This results in the inferiorization and subservience of women, even in the obvious face of success. The white supremacist values that accompany the patriarchy put women of other races doubly at the mercy of the advertising industry (hooks, 1992).

The primary medium of advertisements is the photograph. The photograph is chosen for many reasons, such as ease in creation and reproduction. However, a fundamentally crucial aspect of photographs is the ability to physically alter what is being represented. Photographs allow for extensive preparation of the subject before a photo shoot. These preparations include hair and cosmetic application, as well as strategically constructed settings and placement of props. Aspects such as lighting and camera angle allow photographers to create ideal situations for their subjects to be portrayed. Technology involved in film development and reproduction also allows for physical alterations of the photograph to be made, such as airbrushing and computer-imaging touch-ups (Fowles, 1996). The final product is the image that is presented to consumers, and is portrayed as natural and candid. We consider the image portrayed in the photograph to be possible and real (Berger, 1974), even though it is mostly a fabrication of the photographer's and advertising executive's collective imagination. The constructed nature of the photograph as

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well as the numerous alterations made to it are not considered when the image is consumed.

And how do photographers portray an ever-changing world in a still frame of a photograph? Through utilization of stereotypes, photographers and advertisers can portray a carefully calculated scene (Ritzer, 1996) that will adhere to the intended message as closely as possible (Goffman, 1976). Stereotypes must be strong because individual viewers carry their own subjective experiences into each situation. In order for the photograph to suggest nearly the same meaning to everyone, the photograph must have powerful stereotypes in place (Farran, 1990).

Again, we must consider the patriarchal influences of these stereotypes and the construction of images. Gender is the number one social resource used in modern advertising (Fowles, 1996). This fact, along with the use of advertising as a socialization agent, should show how important it is that advertising portray elements of gender equality. As we will see, however, advertising does not support gender equality, but rather gender inequality at the expense of women. Indeed, as will be explored in detail, women are affected in numerous ways by their depiction in advertisement, including the ideal beauty image, objectification of women and their bodies, the sexuality of women, violence against women, devaluation of feminine qualities, trivialization of women's success, child pornography, and women of color.

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Images of Perfection: Ideal Feminine Beauty

Advertising defines ideal feminine beauty through consistent depiction of certain qualities. The beauty portrayed in advertisements is seen as natural. This natural beauty is a portrayal of the patriarchal image of beauty that embodies physical perfection. This image has been created by the patriarchy to define and limit acceptable parameters of the appearance of women. This is used as a means of control over women and their bodies (Callaghan, 1994). By limiting the acceptability of their appearance, advertisers can successfully control individuality of expression and identity to confine women into behaving in a more passive manner, which takes away the risk of women gaining power over men.

Facial beauty

Women of all ages become consumers on a constant quest to obtain these natural qualities through utilization of an artillery of beauty-enhancing products. The qualities considered beautiful cover the entire female body, from the evenly colored roots of the hair down to the perfectly polished and pedicured toenails. The suggestion to each girl and woman is that there is no area on her body that couldn't use a little improvement. And along with this suggestion accompanies the perfect product for each individual beauty need. Because of the suggestion of imperfection, women become primary consumers for all types of beauty enhancing products. A resulting stereotype that emanates from the ideal beauty image is that women devote all their time to trivial things, such as improving their appearance, while men are doing things devoted to challenge and mastery (Fowles, 1996). This stereotype resulting from the patriarchal ideal of feminine

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beauty sends contradictory messages to women, making them choose the lesser of two evils: be trivial or be ugly, and therefore unnatural and undesirable.

Whatever they choose, the fact remains that women spend billions of dollars a year on hair and cosmetic products. These products are used in attempt to gain young blemish- and wrinkle-free, "Noxzema" skin and silky, shiny, "Pantene-touchable" hair. The products are also used to enhance the features of women, giving them "Loreal" lashes and "Maybelline" luscious lips. The message that these products send to women is that they are not beautiful on their own, and therefore need to enhance or even alter their appearance to become presentable. The image of natural beauty teaches women contempt for their own appearances, and therefore they must do all they can to change it and adhere to the centered, normative patriarchal definition of "natural" beauty. This message is so strong that it has resulted in the recent phenomenon of facelifts, "nose jobs", collagen lip implants, and permanent cosmetic tattooing, in which women attempt to permanently alter the structure and appearance of their faces in the ultimate quest for natural beauty.

The image of beauty portrayed by advertising is an image of the white woman. Beauty characteristics primarily embody features of whiteness, as the vast majority of the women depicted in beauty advertisements are white (Still Killing Us Softly, 1987). When black women are portrayed in beauty ads, they are often used as token economy and they are likely to embody many stereotypical, white characteristics. The message to women of color is that white is beautiful, and therefore to achieve beauty they must adhere to whiteness as

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closely as possible. However, even if they successfully attain many white qualities, such as lighter skin and eyes and straight hair, they will still never reach the image of beauty perfection. This image is naturally reserved for white women alone, because white is analogous to beauty. This patriarchal, white supremacist construction becomes a social reality and is internalized by women of color. This can lead to self-contempt and self-hatred (hooks, 1992; Morrison, 1970), as well as contempt for white women and white people in general.

Bodily perfection

Moving beyond facial beauty alone, the ideal image of beauty is also largely comprised of constraints on body shape and size. Women in advertisements are almost always thin (Still Killing Us Softly, 1987). The limited range of acceptability of body shape is yet another ideal the patriarchy imposes control over women. This not only teaches contempt for overweight women, but the extent of this thinness is unhealthy and unattainable to most women without borderline starvation (Still Killing Us Softly, 1987). This leads to all kinds of eating disorders and use of weight-loss products and services, not to mention surgical liposuction. The ideal body image also can manifest in extreme cases of suicide where self-contempt is overly developed.

Young girls and adolescents are especially vulnerable to self-contempt of their bodies because of the awkward physical changes that accompany puberty. Because young girls are so impressionable, advertising as a socialization agent serves as a means to teach them all about the ideal of beauty and the acceptable qualities that accompany this image. A very surprising statistic revealed by

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Jeanne Kilbourne in the film <u>Still Killing Us Softly</u> (1987) was that 80% of the girls in fourth grade (around 9 years old) were currently or had recently been on a diet. In addition to being thin, young girls also long for the development of large breasts and firm buttocks, reiterating the Barbie ideal. Recently, Barbie has come to life in pre-teen female role models such as Brittney Spears and Christina Aguillera. With these women as role models, young girls can more easily relate to and long for the patriarchal definition of beauty, which limits the appearance of both the face and body to an ideal that is impossible for most women, let alone young girls, to attain. The longing for development of these distinctly female characteristics has led to an increase in breast enhancement surgery, with younger and younger girls applying for the procedure.

What we as consumers don't see is the amount of preparation it takes to adequately portray the beauty image of perfection. We see supermodels with flawless facial features and perfect bodies, splashing in the ocean in their bikinis, modeling skimpy lingerie, or prancing down the runway in revealing clothes. What we don't see is all that goes into the creation of the image of perfection. There are very few women in the world that qualify as supermodels, yet almost all women would love to possess some or all of their qualities. We must remember that the image these women portray is just that: an image. This image is subject to physical editing of the photograph as well as conceptual limitation to what is seen. As supermodel Cindy Crawford contends, "I think women see me on the cover of magazines and think I never have a pimple or bags under my eyes. You have to realize that's after two hours of hair and makeup, plus retouching. Even I

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don't wake up looking like Cindy Crawford." On the same note, supermodel Tyra Banks admitted to having cellulite on her buttocks while on the Oprah Winfrey Show (Jan. 5, 2001). The testimonial of these two women is indisputable evidence for the construction of the ideal image of female beauty, which defies that it is a natural phenomenon, as functionalists would like us to believe. Because we know that the beauty image is just an image, and furthermore that this image is constructed and not natural, we should know that we can easily change this image to a more attainable and accommodating image that would not promote self-contempt in many women. Yet because advertising is used as a socialization agent, the patriarchal image of feminine beauty is perpetuated throughout generations. The function of the advertising industry as it pertains to feminine beauty will continue to define the normal, acceptable, and desirable appearance to females of all ages as a patriarchal means of control over women.

In addition to the oppressive quality that the ideal beauty image has over women, attaining this image of perfection can be very time consuming. Women are stereotypically labeled as being preoccupied with the improvement of their looks. They are seen as devoting all their time and energy in attempt to attain the image of beauty that is so pervasive and normatively defined. This quest for beauty leaves little time for women to perform any meaningful or challenging tasks, which are consequently reserved for men. Therefore, in addition to being held prisoner by the ideal image of feminine beauty, the roles of women are trivialized and comprised of little more than the effort it would take to apply their makeup and hairspray. Advertising images support the tenant that women devote

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little time to meaningful activities as a tradeoff to improving their appearances (Fowles, 1996).

Female Body Objectification

The ideal image of female beauty precipitates many other aspects of the portrayal of women in advertising. Emphasis on perfection of all parts of the female body leads to the separation of these various parts from the whole woman. The parts of the body are examined separately from each other and from the mind of the woman, and consequently used as novelties in the portrayal of women in various advertising strategies. This separation leads to the focus on specific parts of the body, which become objects comparable to the objects and products being sold. Advertising uses women's bodies and specific body parts as commodities in the ultimate effort to make a sale.

The emphasis on perfection of all parts of the female body allows each part to be analyzed and viewed as independent of the woman they belong to. Women are much more likely than men to be partially depicted in advertisements (Fowles, 1996). Women's bodies become objects that are used interchangeably with the merchandise being sold. Because the focus is taken off of the whole woman and placed on various parts of the body, it is easy to view these parts as objects rather than belonging to a living, breathing human being. The objectification that occurs is yet another way in which the patriarchy has devalued the role of women. If the woman is broken down, almost symbolically dismembered into parts that are seen as mere objects, how can these parts belong

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to something that constitutes more than a larger-scaled object? By focusing on various parts of the body, the woman as a whole is also dehumanized and objectified.

The objectification of female body parts sends off messages about women's sexuality, which are consumed by both men and women alike. By objectifying the individual parts of a woman's body, men can view the female body as an object existing solely for the fulfillment of their sexual needs and desires. Since the woman is just an object, there is no need to respect her, let alone treat her as equal. In addition, women consume these images of their body parts and attempt not only to perfect each part (as was seen with the ideal beauty image), but also display them in a manner that reflects what they have seen as desirable. This portrayal and focus on women's body parts successfully stereotype and pigeonhole female sexuality, in which both men and women internalize the images of advertising. These images define normal, acceptable, and desirable female sexual behavior and display of their bodies.

Women and Sex

Sexual Stereotypes

The use of sex in advertising is a widespread practice. There is even a cliché that states it quite simply: "Sex sells." If a product can be glamorized through association with sex, even when the particular product has no direct link to sex, the image of the product is that much more appealing. Women and their bodies become sex objects (Fowles, 1996), with no more link to humanness than

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the products they are selling. The parts of the female body that are most often examined are those parts having to do with her sexuality – namely the breasts, crotch, and buttocks. These areas of the body become the center or focus of many ads that usually have nothing to do with any of these areas. Because these areas are a main focus, they are subject to an emphasis on their enhancement and perfection. The images that isolate these parts of the body not only objectify them, but also send out messages about the sexuality of women. The main message of women's sexuality that is prevalent in advertising is that women are subordinate and serve to satisfy the sexual needs of men. For example, women are much more likely to be pictured on a bed or floor than men (Goffman, 1976), which not only highlights the use of sexual suggestion in advertising, but also the inferior social position assigned to women.

Because advertising is a primary socialization agent, the message to young girls is that they must not only be sexy, but they must be willing to give up their bodies to men because men are superior beings. There are other, more openly socially acceptable messages regarding the sexuality of women which run contradictory to the messages prevalent in advertising, but which still serve to benefit men in the long run. Women who are loose with their sexual endeavors are seen as tainted merchandise, lacking self-control, and consequently unworthy of any real affection. On the other end of this dualistic nature, men with extensive sexual experiences are seen as more masculine and desirable, which shows a definite inequality in gender representation. These contradictory messages to women pertaining to the role of their sexuality can be very confusing. The

images portrayed in advertising make the super-sexual role of women appealing,
and many women and young girls attempt to use their sexuality to gain the
affection of men. The problem is that these men also consume the images and
believe that women exist for the fulfillment of their sexual pleasures, so they have
no problem treating women like the objects they see in advertisements.

Women of color

Women of color are subject to additional stereotypes when their sexuality
is portrayed. African-American women are often depicted in advertising as exotic,
overly sexual beings that will engage in erotic activity with any willing partner.
They are portrayed as "sexual savages who use their bodies to seduce and conquer
men" (hooks, 1992). Their sexual willingness implies that they not only gratify
their own sexual needs freely, but they also use their sexuality to obtain material
and non-material means of personal advancement. The focus on their carefree
sexual attitude leads to resulting stereotypes of the unwed mother and the welfare
queen, in which African-American women produce babies to obtain more federal
assistance so they can continue to be "lazy" and not work (Culverson, 1998).
This stereotype not only suggests that African-American women are sexual and
lazy, but also that they lack the intelligence to obtain a meaningful occupation.

Latina women are often depicted as promiscuous and dishonorable women
after the hearts of white men. With latinas, the darker their skin becomes, the
more sinister and evil their motives are (Castro, 1998). They are hot-blooded and
fiery, and these aspects of their sexuality carry over into their personalities as
being immoral and willing to betray just about anyone if it will result in personal

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gain. In addition, latina women are seen as undereducated and have a main life goal of marriage, which supports the submissive role of women to men, and consequent gender inequality (Castro, 1998).

Images of Native-American women are rarely used in advertising, but stereotypes of their sexuality exist nonetheless. They are portrayed as exotic and mystical creatures, rarely seen as important in their community or even clothed. The only role they are believed to have had was that of caregiver of the children, and often they were just one of many wives in polygamous societies. In actuality, Native-American women held very important roles in tribal times in which they were leaders and officials in their communities, many of which were matrilineal and egalitarian (Lujan, 1998). The demotion of Native-American women is likely a function of the socialization of the role of women through such indices as advertising and mass media. Furthermore, stereotyping of Native-Americans in general is likely a result of the white supremacist justification for the oppression and exploitation of these people whom we forced out of the mainland and into reservations.

Asian American women are often portrayed as devious, mysterious, and overly sexual, especially when compared to the stereotypes of their Asian American men counterparts as the "model immigrants" (Nakayama, 1998). Their erotic and exotic nature sends pornographic images of their availability solely to the white man, eliminating Asian American and all other men from the competition for these women. Asian American women have also been stereotyped as the ultimately submissive women, honorable and obedient to their husbands.

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The phenomenon of "mail order brides" from Asian countries reinforces the idea that women serve to satisfy the needs of men, whatever they may be. The suggestion of mail-order brides to the sexuality of women is that women will serve any need of any man if the price is right. In addition, Asian American women have stereotypically been linked with prostitution, likely resulting from the Vietnam War and many movies that have stemmed from this era. One classic example comes from the film Full Metal Jacket, in which a Vietnamese prostitute proclaims to the white soldiers "Me so horny, me love you long time".

Misogyny and sexuality

Another stereotype used in advertising is that of the evil woman who uses her sexuality in attempt to gain power over men. Women are often seen as temptresses: fiery, hot-blooded creatures who will entice men and eat them for dinner. Although this view may fill the sexual fantasies of some men, the stereotype generally yields a misogynistic view of women and their sexuality, in which women are feared and dreaded. The ultimate result of misogyny is the justification of violence against women, and the beliefs that women need to be controlled, dominated, and subdued. This view is further supported by the gender inequality displayed in advertising. In addition to women being placed in the misogynistic view, products can also contribute to the development of this stereotype. For example, Christian Dior's Poison perfume suggests the inherent danger of women by identifying a toxic substance as a desirable commodity for women to consume (Hoffman-Jeep, 1996). A historical example of the patriarchy's use of misogyny can be found in the Salem witch trials. In colonial

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times, hundreds of women were executed because of mere accusations that they were witches, with no objective criteria for the truth of the accusations. This senseless massacre emphasizes the extent to which the patriarchy has and will continue to go in order to reinforce the misogynistic view of women.

Violence Against Women

Justification and Desensitization

Advertisements not only objectify the female body through partial depiction and focus on body parts, but they also send messages as to the evil nature of women's sexuality. The logical outcome of these methods of advertising is the justification of violence against women (Still Killing Us Softly, 1987). If a woman is seen as nothing more than a collection of objects, violence against women will be more easily justified than if she were seen as a human being. In addition, the underlying assumption of misogyny is that women need to be dominated and controlled because they are evil and unpredictable. There is even a myth that women enjoy being controlled and coerced, which justifies the "no means yes" phenomenon that exists in the mentality of some rapists and sexual offenders.

Advertising uses images to trivialize violence against women. One of these images is that of the romantic stranger (Still Killing Us Softly, 1987). In this image, women are confronted with an unfamiliar, often shadowy and looming figure of a man with whom anticipation of a romantic episode is implied. In real life, most women confronted by a shadowy, looming figure would be frightened

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at the possibility of violence and not sexually aroused. The use of the romantic stranger image suggests not only that women are ultimately used for fulfilling the needs of men, but also that women enjoy the thrill that comes with being confronted by strange men.

Although violence against women is seen in advertising, it is more prevalent in the music industry on album covers and in music videos. The extent to which these images are consumed makes the public that is continually confronted with these images more callous to violence. In one particular video, Dr. Dre's "The Next Episode," women are depicted barely dressed and dancing at a party while getting doused with beer and other alcoholic beverages. Furthermore, the women in the video seem to enjoy being displayed in this degrading, violently sexual manner, which sends messages about the sexual availability and desires of all women to the people who consume the images seen in the music video. This video has been linked to an incident that occurred in New York City's Central Park in the summer of 2000. During this episode, nearly 50 women were sexually assaulted by a large group of young men who were spraying beer on them and grabbing at their clothes, in many cases ripping them off. The event closely resembled those images in Dr. Dre's video.

Battering, physical, and sexual abuse become natural and increasingly justifiable byproducts of the images portrayed in advertising and other agents of mass media. The violence-provoking images of women also serve to widen the inequality in gender representation, putting the male on top of the dualistic nature and confining the female to a passive and dependent role. Violence against

women is an inevitable result of the manner in which they are depicted in the images of mass media.

Roots of Child Pornography

Images of women in advertising often include women who possess childlike qualities, whether it is physical smallness, juvenile costume and makeup, soft voices, or innocence and weakness. These qualities are likely to be idealized and portrayed as desirable. Whatever childlike quality the woman may possess, the image sends a powerful message to women and, more importantly, young girls. The message is that vulnerability is sexy, and that girls should stay powerless, passive, and dependent if they wish to be viewed as desirable (Still Killing Us Softly, 1987).

The images utilizing a childlike portrayal of women not only reach young girls, but also reach potential sex offenders. Therefore, the consequences of these images presented in advertising pose grave dangers to young girls and adolescent women. Statistics show that 1 in 4 girls are sexually assaulted during childhood, and 25% of all rape victims are under the age of 18 (Still Killing Us Softly, 1987). The idealization of childlike qualities of women can reinforce the fantasies of pedophilliacs or merely glamorize adolescent and juvenile characteristics to make them sexy and appealing. Young girls are often targets of sexual assault not because they are sexy, but because they are physically weak and vulnerable, and therefore the perfect prey for rapists and molesters (Cain, 1996). The psychological consequences of sexual abuse can be detrimental, possibly causing a lifetime of anguish and self-hatred, even leading to suicide in extreme cases

(Faulkner, 1996). Images of advertising support the sexual glamorization of young girls and adolescents by making juvenile qualities desirable and also by portraying innocence and vulnerability as sexy. In an attempt to control and subdue women, the patriarchy has consequently put all women, especially young girls and adolescents, at risk for sexual assault and abuse.

Trivialization of Women

Submissive, Inferior Roles

Success, especially financial success, is a highly valued concept in the capitalistic American society. Men are taught to strive for the qualities that it takes to become successful, such as power, dominance, and control. The qualities and desires of males become the center, and anything that is not associated with these centered qualities is shoved to the periphery and viewed as undesirable. Therefore, qualities not associated with becoming successful are devalued and belittled. Following the dualistic nature of gender imposed by patriarchy, women are automatically assigned opposite qualities to those of men, which would therefore be associated with unsuccessful or trivial roles in society. These qualities would include such traits as submission, vulnerability, and lack of ability to control not only others, but themselves. The inherent message is that women must look to men to obtain security and stability in their lives because they are incapable of achieving these things for themselves. The images in advertising reflect these patriarchal ideals through the limitation of the roles of women. The roles that are socially assigned to women require much less intelligence and

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ambition than the roles that are assigned to men. The stereotypes of women and

their roles as reflected in advertising serve to weaken and pacify women, assuring

that they will remain dependent on, and therefore subservient to men. The

importance of men is seen to surpass that of women, as is evident in the consistent

physical positioning of men as higher or larger than women when they appear in

the same picture in an advertisement (Fowles, 1996). Additionally, women are

often pictured as being behind or overlapped by men, which also shows their

diminished social status in relation to men (Goffman, 1976).

Women and domestication

The most common role of women in advertising takes place in the

domestic setting. While men are portrayed in situations that are challenging and

promote mastery of their environment, women are responsible for such chores as

childcare, housekeeping, and meal preparation. The only thing women are

mastering is the control of toilet germs and greasy dishes. They spend nearly all

their time caring for their homes and families (Fowles, 1996). One study found

that 75% of all ads that contained women were selling bathroom and cleaning

products (Stephenson et al, 1997). Although many women in the real world are

primarily responsible for such chores, the suggestion that underlies such

advertisements is that women must perform these roles as their duty to serve their

men. A subsequent suggestion is that men are much too important and intelligent

to be reduced to performing domestic chores, and women inherently lack the

importance and intelligence to do anything but domestic chores. When men are

depicted in a domestic setting such as a kitchen or doing housework, they usually

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have nothing to do with what is going and remain uninvolved and uninterested, otherwise occupied (Goffman, 1976). For example, a man may be sitting at the kitchen table reading the paper while his wife prepares breakfast and gets the kids ready for school, or he may be watching television and kindly lift his feet so his wife can vacuum under them.

Trivialization of successful women

Because women have recently become more involved in the professional scene and broken the "housewife" mold, advertisements are increasingly portraying women in roles that suggest some amount of achievement and less trivialization than traditional domestic confinement. However, the level of success that is available to women is displayed as limited, and the success of women is trivialized. This is no doubt the influence of patriarchal ideals on women, which constantly succeed in keeping women inferior to men at all costs. The trivialization of successful women is exemplified in the fact that men in advertisements are more likely to perform executive roles over women (Goffman, 1976), such as men being cast in the role of doctors or businessmen versus women as nurses or secretaries. Advertising as a socialization agent not only reflects gender inequality in the workplace, but also reinforces and validates this inequality. In addition, women in professional roles have been found to be stereotypically limited to such occupations as realtors, interior designers, and small business owners (Stephenson et al., 1997). The advertising industry has continued to exclude women from occupying high-status positions in the professional world. The suggestion is that no matter what boundary women have

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crossed to become successful, they will always be at least one step behind men because they don't inherently possess the qualities that are required to become successful.

The women that become somewhat successful and enter into the professional realm have obviously adopted the qualities associated with men in order to achieve their level of success. To be successful, a woman must cast away all feminine qualities she may possess in order to become more centered and normative (hooks, 1992). However, women who adopt these qualities of ambition are seen as unhappy people because of the dual responsibilities of mother and career-woman (Stephenson et al., 1997). In addition, women who adopt qualities of men are seen as unnatural and often categorized into negative stereotypes. Stereotypical characteristics of successful women may include being pushy, bossy, "bitchy", or being typecast as a "butch" or lesbian. Misogynistic stereotypes about women and their sexuality are also evident. A woman's success is often joked about as coming to terms as a result of her "sleeping her way to the top." This stereotype suggests that women are incapable of achieving anything by the merit of their own intelligence and determination, and therefore must have used their sexuality (the only logical outlet of female control) to gain power and prestige through corporate prostitution.

A message to children

The messages about the diminished importance of women and their trivial roles are viewed and internalized by children as a result of the power of advertising as a socialization agent. As children develop their identities, all of the

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images they consume through advertising are incorporated into their definition of their appropriate gender roles. From the earliest age, children are taught the submissive role of women to men. Young boys are grandfathered into the male privilege and learn their superior role over females at an early age. Young girls are taught their proper, inferior role to men and shown their domestic boundaries. Even in programs aimed at children, females are portrayed in a diminished status to men in that they are more likely to be younger and less often employed, but no doubt will have their marital and family roles in tact. Furthermore, only 22% of the characters in children's programs are female (Fowles, 1996), which suggests that males are more important and irreplaceable, but women can be done without. When young girls are portrayed in advertisements, they are usually confined indoors to a domestic setting, whether they are helping their mothers or playing with dolls. This portrayal of girls partaking in domestic chores and nurturing activities allows for easy identification of their expected roles (Goffman, 1976). They are also more likely to be pictured sleeping, which portrays them as alone and vulnerable (Fowles, 1996). In contrast to the depiction of young girls, young boys are more likely to be outside playing and participating in activities that promote challenge and mastery (Fowles, 1996), which shows the inequality of gender roles from an early age. Young children pick up on these subtle cues and interpret them as their social assignment. Their sense of the world and the way it works is developed largely through the exemplars of behavior and gender relationships depicted in advertising.

Conclusion

Advertising is a powerful tool used to serve certain functions within the functionalist society of America. An obvious function includes the presentation of goods and services available from manufacturers for the public consumption. Advertising is a financially driven industry, and as such uses many methods of persuasion and glamorization to increase the appeal of products. As a result, images associated with these products are created and glamorized. Often times, these images include stereotypes that exploit, degrade, or diminish the importance of women.

The images of women depicted in advertising include ideals of beauty, which can lead to emphasis on the parts and perfection of the female body as well as female body objectification. One consequence of female body objectification is the creation and perpetuation of female sexual stereotypes, with additional stereotypes existing for women of color. Because the body is objectified, violence against women as presented in advertising becomes more acceptable. This violence, along with images and stereotypes of female sexuality, contributes to the increased use in advertising techniques rooted in child pornography, with the capability to contribute to child sexual abuse. In addition to the physical attributes of women, the female roles depicted in advertising are trivialized and diminished in importance, especially in contrast to men. All of these images serve to shape and define young people's understanding of gender roles and relationships because advertising has become a major socialization agent in our consumer-based American society. Because advertising in many cases focuses on

gender inequality at the expense of women, the message to children becomes focused on the inferiority and objectification of the female mind and body, naturally placing females at a lower position in the social hierarchy.

Although the gender inequality represented in advertising most negatively affects women, it is not just a female problem. However, this problem has been traditionally viewed as a woman's burden because of the essentialistic portrayal of the female mind and body. What is happening with the portrayal of women in advertising is not their biological destiny, but rather the result of the patriarchal system that benefits advertisers, CEOs, and the owners of companies. Indeed, the construction of beauty images and the roles of females depicted in advertising are not natural, but rather created. The element of creation inherent to these images allows their legitimacy to be examined and discussed (Callaghan, 1994). Once the essentialistic rendition of female identity is collapsed, those advertisers no longer have the justification for the continued and objectified negative portrayal of women.

When the created nature of the female images used in advertising is fully realized, the power of these images will be open for discussion. The doubt and skepticism of current female representation generated by this discussion will create space for alternative female identities to emerge. Female beauty, roles, and sexuality must be collectively defined and turned into an eclectic, all-encompassing image that is a result of integration of many, not just selection by few (Callaghan, 1994). Women must not be dualistically limited to being defined in terms of those characteristics that are opposite of men. The breakdown of

dualism is likely to occur when the constructed, rather than biological and essential, nature of images is uncovered and the credibility of these images is undermined. The result of changing the images of women as they are portrayed in advertising has the potential to greatly affect the gender relations in other realms of society. When children are socialized under equitable gender images, they will be more likely to carry the impact of these images of equality into political, economic, and occupational settings. By changing gender relations and depiction in advertising, the effects are likely to resonate with gender equality throughout the remaining spheres of society.

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Ideal body image: The image of these women perpetuates the emphasis of being thin that is seen in many advertisements. It sends a message to all females as to the ideal body shape, however unattainable that may be.

Ideal beauty image: Along with countless ads for products that promise to enhance facial beauty that clutter every fashion magazine in print, this product is especially concerned with keeping the face looking young. This ad helps illustrate the emphasis on youthful looks and even contempt for older women that exists as a result of the construction of the ideal beauty image.
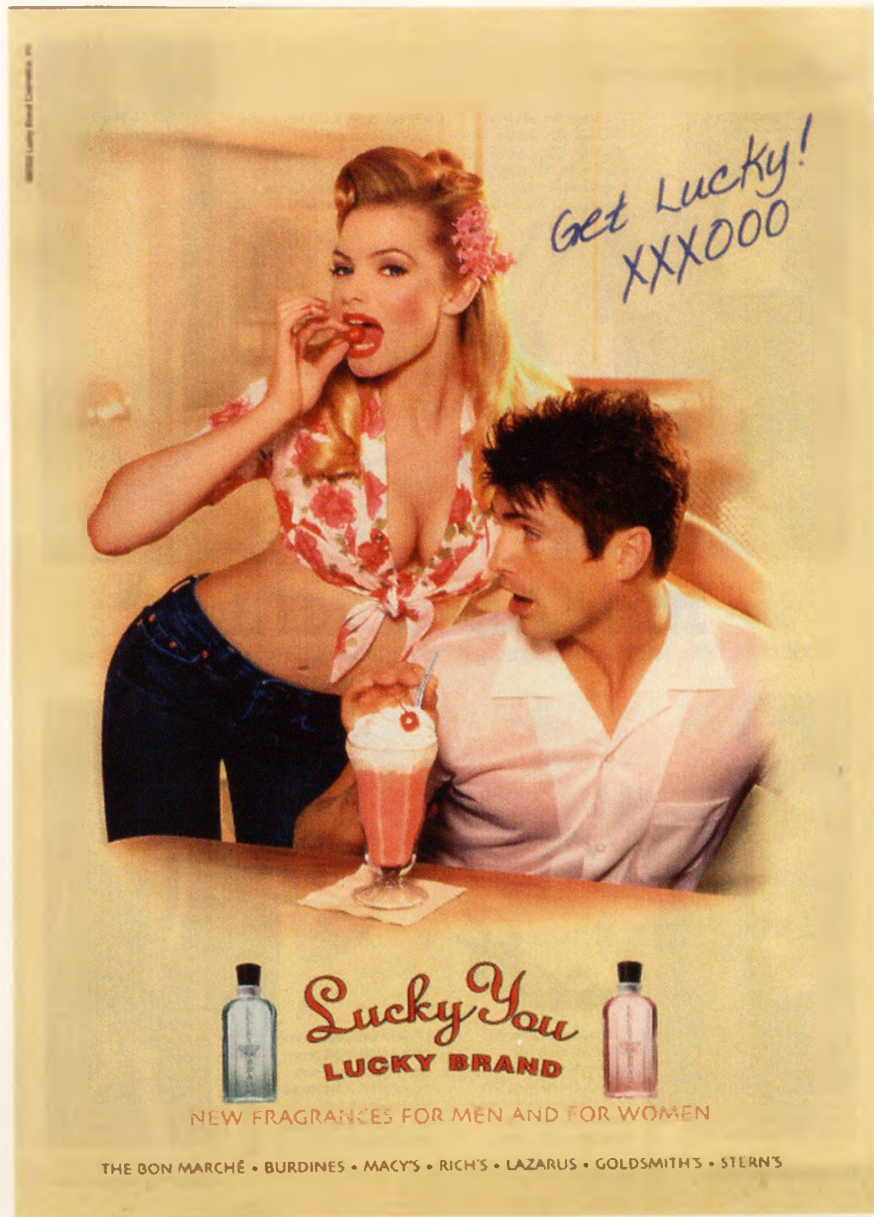
Women and sex: This ad has obvious sexual connotation. By placing the woman's breasts at the center of the picture, the gaze is naturally directed to this area. Also, the emphasis on her mouth is sexually suggestive. Use of sexual messages and images is a tactic that helps make products more appealing.
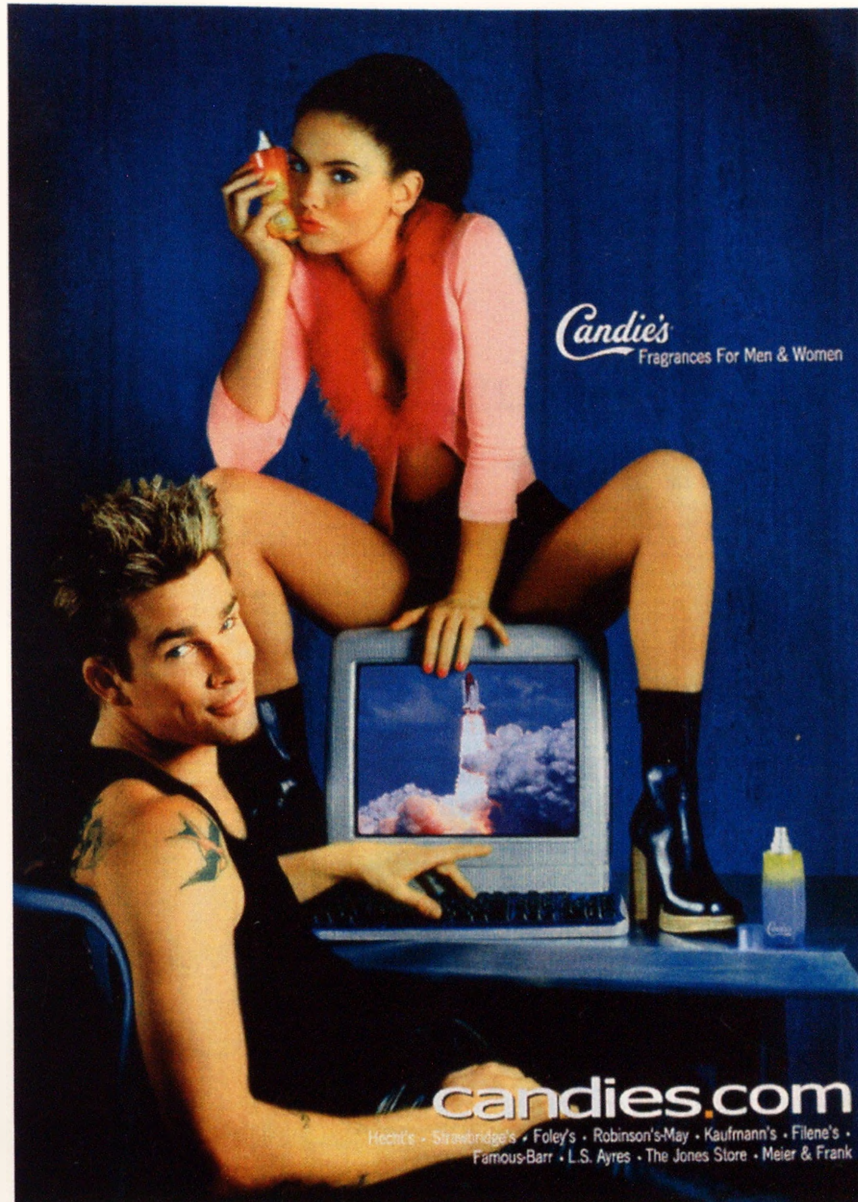
Women and sex: This ad also has blatant sexual undertones. The woman's crotch is placed in the center of the picture, and the man is in control of a phallic-shaped object heading straight for this area. This ad sends messages of sexual availability and even violence toward women through the use of sex.

Women and sex: This ad not only shows a woman in a sexually compromising position, but it also uses objectification of the female body. By airbrushing over the woman's body, she no longer appears to be human, but rather doll-like with all the qualities of an inanimate object.
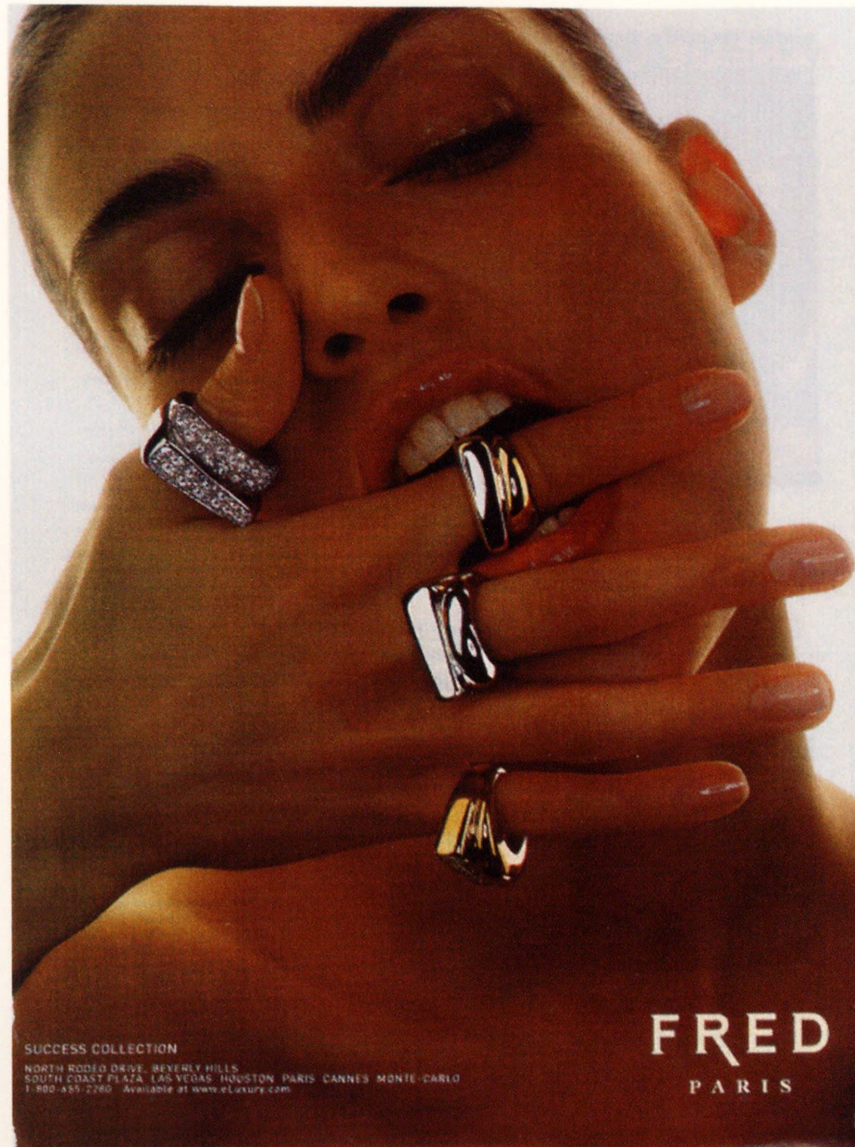
Women and sex: This woman is shown naked and acting sexually toward objects. The name of these rings, the "Success Collection", also suggests that women desire material things of great value and will do whatever it takes to get them, even through the use of sex.

Women and sex: This ad for a man's fragrance uses the image of a naked woman, suggesting that women and their sexuality are for men to use at their disposal.
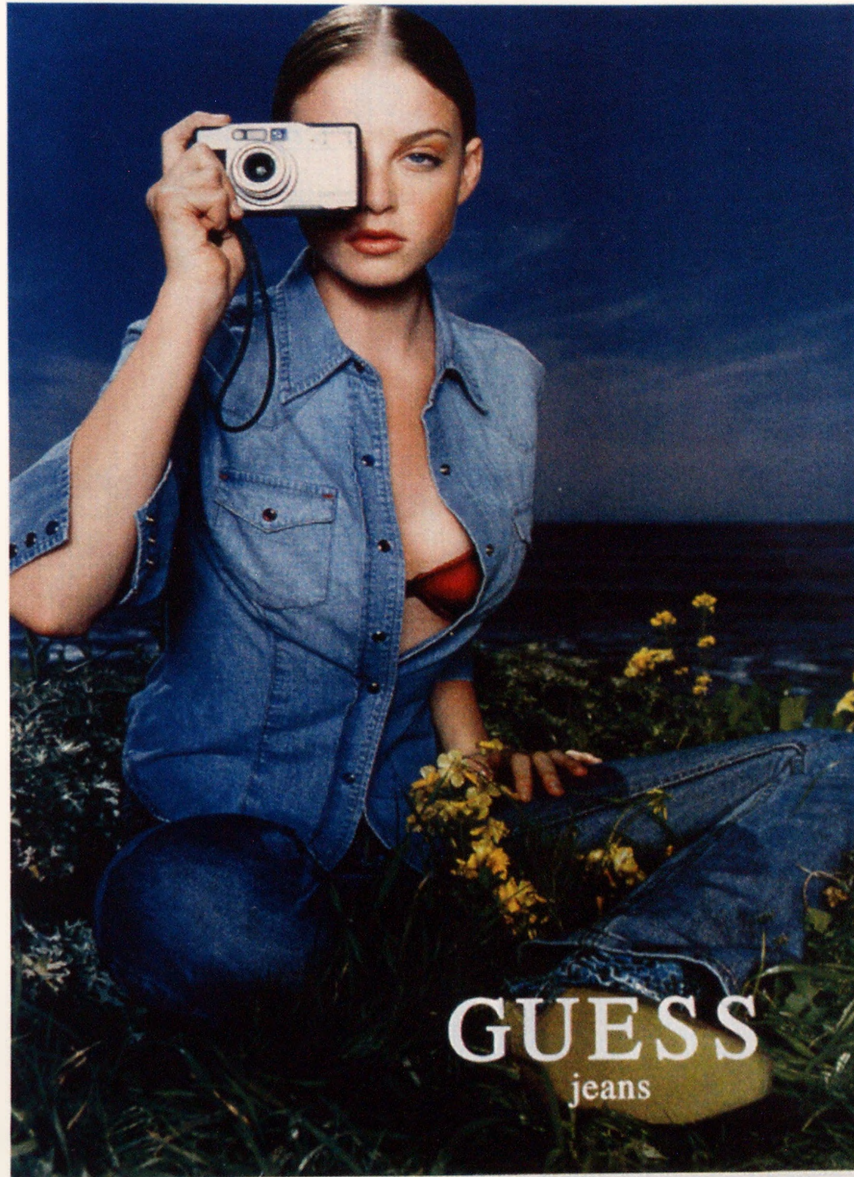
Focus on body parts: There is no apparent reason for the exposure of this woman's breast except to utilize the parts of her body to sell more jeans.

Focus on body parts: This woman is partially depicted in revealing clothing that focuses on the parts of her body most related to her sexuality. The message of this picture as it relates to the product separates the person from the body, portraying women in an appealing manner to men and perhaps suggesting the sexual availability of women's bodies apart from themselves as a whole.
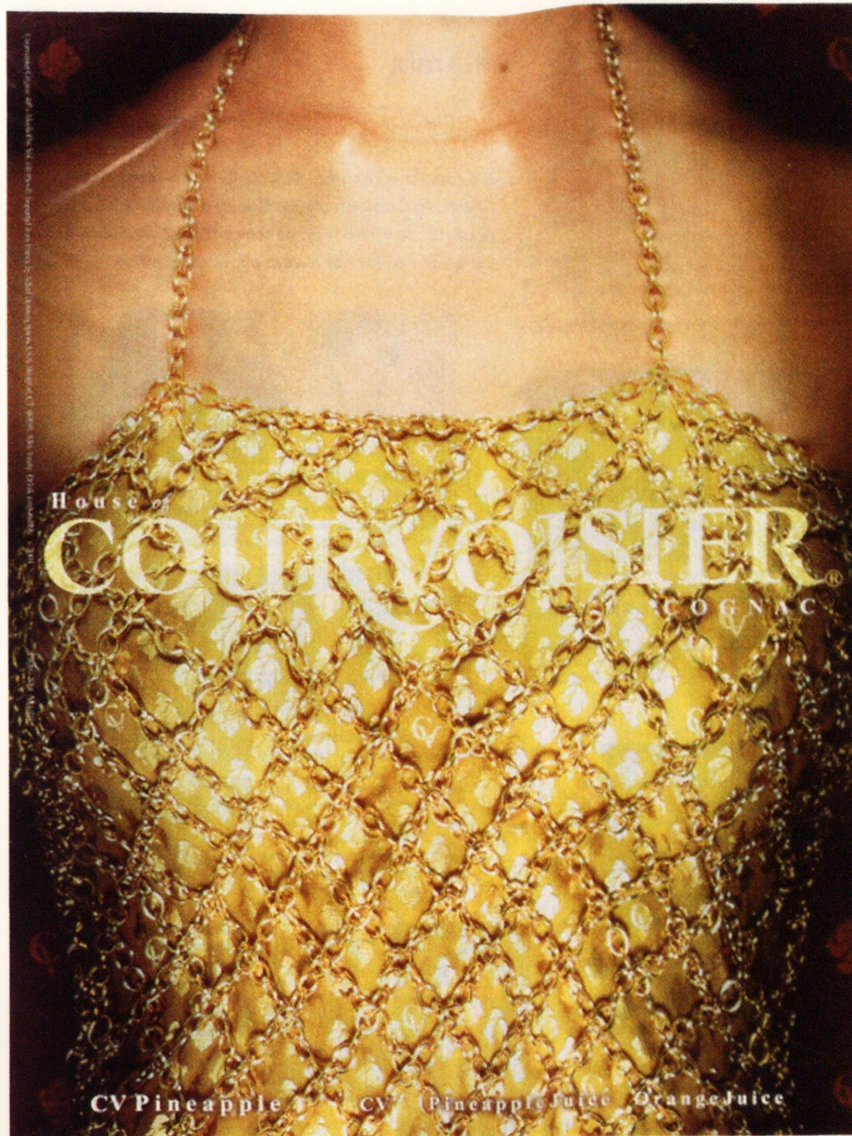
Focus on body parts: However clever the use of a woman's torso to mimic the shape and texture of a pineapple may be, the makers of this ad knew very well that they were using female body parts to sell their product. This partial depiction of a woman is yet another example of how women and their bodies are objectified and sold in the same manner as the products they advertise.

Focus on body parts: There is no apparent reason for the use of a half-naked woman in this ad, except to grab the consumer's attention and again use woman and their sexuality to sell products. The partial depiction and the manner in which this woman is displayed also suggest an element of violence.
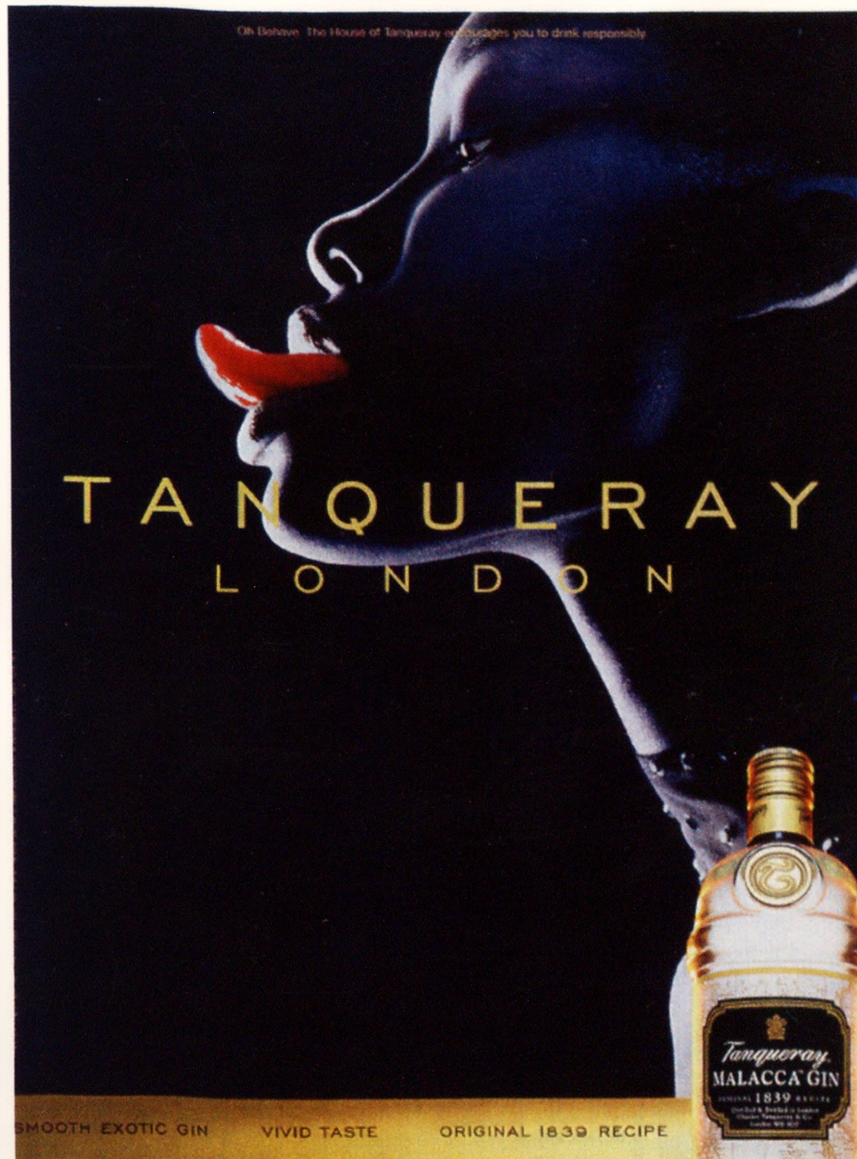
Women of color: This depiction of a black woman suggests the exotic and willing nature of the sexuality of black women. The use of the color red draws the focus to the tongue, which is inherently sexual and luring.

Child pornography: The female in this picture is obviously a child made up in an adult fashion. Not only does the makeup attach sexuality to a young girl, but also the man in this picture seems to be experiencing sexual excitement despite the girl's youth.
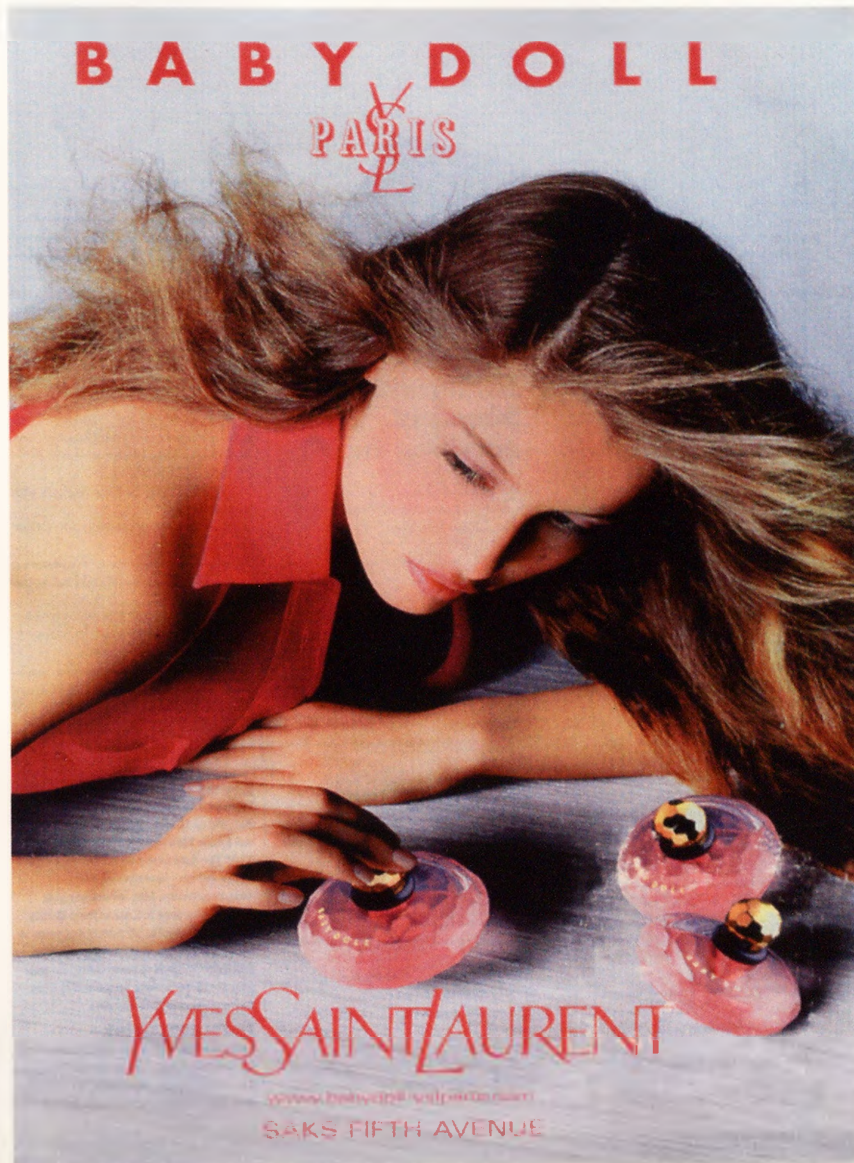
Child pornography: The name of this perfume, along with the soft, pastel look of the model in the photograph, suggests that youth and childlike qualities are sexy and desirable.

Misogyny and sex: The women in this ad are pictured seducing men with ulterior motives to eat them, while the men remain unaware of these intentions. This ad promotes a misogynistic view of women and their sexuality in that the women are shown using their powers of seduction for evil tasks.

Misogyny and sex: This image of a vampire woman in a revealing leather outfit reinforces the link between sex and the misogynistic view of women.

Domestic roles: Women are often depicted in advertisements for household products that show them conquering the world of dirt and germs. This woman seems to have completed her life ambition of eliminating odors, which suggests the inferiority of the importance of women in contrast to their male counterparts who are out conquering the business world.

Trivialization of successful women: This ad acknowledges the struggles that women have had in gaining occupational equality to men, but then proceeds to trivialize their role in the business world. The message is that women will always be preoccupied with their appearance. Further, the upward angle used in the picture lures the viewer to look up her skirt, which again links women to sex in all realms of society.